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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

While citing PM Sharon's denial of remarks made Wednesday by his strategic advisor Eyal Arad concerning additional unilateral withdrawal in the West Bank, Ha'aretz highlighted the belief of the defense establishment, particularly that of the IDF's main organs for strategic thought -- the Planning Directorate and Military Intelligence (MI) -- that unilateral moves are the best strategy for Israel. Jerusalem Post, too, noted this trend. In a speech to an economic conference broadcast by Israel Radio this morning, Sharon said: "There is only one plan, and that is the Roadmap." Israel Radio quoted Sharon as saying that many ambassadors had queried Israel on this matter, and that Washington had made a very stern appeal on this matter.

Israel Radio emphasized a comment made by a State Department spokesperson on Wednesday that the Palestinians' "responsibility is to act to stop any terrorism, to act to dismantle terrorist networks." The radio also reported that the spokesperson renewed the United States' call on Israel to show restraint when dealing with the PA and to make the lives of Palestinians easier.

Ha'aretz's web site quoted a U.S. official as saying on Wednesday that PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas will visit Washington on October 20 to discuss ways to pursue the Middle East peace process following the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. The official was quoted as saying that the two leaders would discuss "the way forward." The newspaper quoted Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat as saying Wednesday that, despite the cancellation of an Abbas-Sharon meeting, which had been set for October 2, it was time to resume negotiations. Jerusalem Post reported that Minister-without-Portfolio Haim Ramon (Labor) and PA Information Minister Nabil Shaath met with Swedish Minister of Development Carin Jamtim in Stockholm on Wednesday to discuss the future of the Gaza Strip. The newspaper quoted Ramon and Shaath as saying they were representing their political parties rather than their governments.

All media reported that on Wednesday, Maj. Gen. Yisrael Ziv, head of the IDF Operations Branch, threatened that Israel would turn the northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Hanun into a "demilitarized zone" if any Qassam rockets are fired from there into Israel. Israel Radio reported that this morning three Palestinians, including Samer Sa'adi, the head of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Jenin, were killed in two separate clashes with the IDF near the city. The radio quoted local Brigades leader Zacharia Zubeidi as saying that his men will consequently no longer respect the "tahdiya"

(lull). Ha'aretz cited the belief of MI that the recent escalation by Hamas -- including the kidnapping and killing of an Israeli civilian, and its videotaping of the act, which strengthened Hamas's image as a terrorist organization that acts like Al-Qaida in Iraq, has harmed Hamas's standing. The newspaper says that MI's conclusion, which fits in with the cabinet's position, is that Israel must keep pressuring Hamas. In a report from the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem Post found that local residents are growing wary of Hamas.

Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday, Abbas urged Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to exert pressure on Israel to halt its military offensive in the Gaza Strip. The newspaper also reported that Abbas appealed to Mubarak to use his good offices with Hamas and other armed groups to force them to abide by the unofficial truce with Israel.

All media note that the Intifada started exactly five years ago. Recapitulating its own data, and that of the IDF, Shin Bet, Foreign Ministry, and Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, Ha'aretz writes that 1,033 Israelis and 3,333 Palestinians were killed during the Intifada. Figures vary in the different media, which note that only 56 Israelis were killed during the past year.

Maariv reported that, for the first time, Arab families are moving to Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. The newspaper quoted Yisrael Kamhi, who is writing research on the impact of the "Jerusalem envelope" fence, as saying that this development is grounded on the fear of East Jerusalem Arab residents who were left beyond the fence that they might lose their rights in the city.

Ha'aretz and Jerusalem Post printed an AP story, according to which Israel urged Arab nations on Wednesday to withdraw a push to have Israel declared a menace to peace at a 139-nation meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency, suggesting Iran's suspected nuclear programs posed the real threat to the Middle East.

Ha'aretz reported that Sharon does not intend to name any of the Likud "rebels" who opposed the disengagement plan as ministers or deputy ministers, despite demands from senior Likud members, including Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, that he take such a step in order to heal the rifts in the party. The newspaper quoted Sharon associates as saying on Wednesday that only two Sharon loyalists, Deputy Defense Minister Zeev Boim and MK Roni Bar-On, would be appointed ministers.

Yediot, Maariv, and Israel Radio reported that Israel's judicial authorities are expected to review the Justice Ministry's Police Investigations Unit's closure of all investigations into the October 2000 riots that left 13 Arab citizens dead.

Jerusalem Post reported that the Labor and Shinui parties look to capitalize on turmoil in the Likud, making it impossible to pass the budget without significant changes.

Jerusalem Post cited data published by the GOI's Central Bureau of Statistics on Wednesday, prior to the Jewish New Year, Jews, who numbered some 5,237,600 in 2004, comprise 76.2 percent of Israel's population, down from 77.8 percent in 2000. The 1,107,400 Muslims constitute 16.1 percent of the populace, up from 15.2 percent in 2000. The percentage of Christians and Druze (2.1 percent and 1.6 percent respectively) has remained stable since the beginning of the millennium, while the rate of those with no given religion has grown from 3.3 percent to 3.9 percent over the same period.

Yediot quoted Attorney Liora Glatt-Berkowitz as saying that some facts about Sharon's investigation into the "straw companies" affair have "regrettably" not yet been made public. When she was a member of the state prosecution, Glatt-Berkowitz had leaked details of Sharon's probe to Ha'aretz.

On Wednesday, Yediot featured a group of young Israeli engineers who came to New Orleans to help rebuild the city.

Leading media reported that on Wednesday, a federal court in Miami approved an arrangement, according to which the United States will pay compensation to Hungarian Jews whose property was confiscated during World War II in what is known as the "gold train" affair.

Mideast:

Summary:

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The security turnabout is due primarily to developments in the diplomatic realm. Of these, by far the most important was the death of Yasser Arafat and his replacement by Mahmoud Abbas."

Conservative columnist Nadav Shragai wrote in Ha'aretz: "The IDF ... has ... become a reactive rather than an offensive force."

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in popular, pluralist Maariv: "[Netanyahu] has continued to use the hackneyed slogans of the previous war.... Yossi Beilin isn't going to be particularly pleased with the results of the next elections either, because he too has refused to abandon the positions of the old Left, which many of us no longer share."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Unless the condition of complete disarmament is imposed on the Palestinian groups, there is no chance of Israel enjoying the luck of the Irish." Attorney Moti Cristal, who was a senior advisor on negotiations affairs to former prime minister Ehud Barak, wrote in Ha'aretz: "Unilateral Israeli actions are constructive, in particular given the partner's weakness, but they are limited in their ability to achieve long-term strategic stability."

Political analyst Daniel Diker, who writes for the conservative periodical Techelet, opined in Maariv: "[Sharon associates] Tzachi Hanegbi and Eyal Arad are again mentioning the inevitable possibility of a unilateral step. In fact, this is a return to the idea of defensible borders."

Block Quotes:

I. "A Reading of the Numbers"

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (September 29): "Sometimes, dry statistics tell the story. Granted, it is not necessary to look at the numbers to know that Israelis' security situation has improved. It is sufficient to visit the cafes, which are filled to overflowing. Some of them have even fired their security guards. Nevertheless, the numbers are astounding: only 56 Israelis were killed by Palestinian terror in the Intifada's fifth year, which ends today -- less than half the number of fatalities in the fourth year and one-seventh the number in the terrible second year. The number of Palestinian fatalities also fell, mainly due to a reduction in Israeli military activity in the territories in the second half of the year. But some military operations, such as last October's Operation Days of Penitence in Gaza, were still deadly, and that is the main reason for the growing imbalance in the casualty figures: eight Palestinian fatalities for every Israeli fatality this year, compared to an overall ratio of 3:1 for the five-year conflict as a whole. The security turnabout is due primarily to developments in the diplomatic realm. Of these, by far the most important was the death of Yasser Arafat and his replacement by Mahmoud Abbas. Even though Abbas took almost no practical steps against the terrorist organizations, his opposition to terror was clear, and in practice, the number of attacks dropped significantly."

II. "The Loss of a Huge Strategic Asset: Deterrence"

Conservative columnist Nadav Shragai wrote in Ha'aretz (September 29): "The dozens of Qassam rockets that fell on Sderot are the instinctive response by those whom we have trained ... to believe that Israel sees the 6,000 or so mortars and rockets fired on the residents of Gush Katif as nothing more than rain.... This Jewish New Year will be the fifth birthday of that war, and its cyclical nature embodies Israel's loss in its confrontation with the Palestinians, a huge strategic asset that Israel had but has no longer: deterrence. The loss did not happen in a day, but the 'Second Intifada,' as the terror war has been called, greatly accelerated it. Ever since 'Peace for Galilee' [the official name of the 1982 Lebanon War], the IDF has been fighting low-level wars, but despite many localized successes it has had difficulty coping with

them.... Successive Israeli governments -- from Yitzhak Rabin's to Ariel Sharon's -- refused to go 'full tilt' against the Palestinians. The Palestinians were quick to understand this spirit. They were encouraged and made bolder by Israel's hurried withdrawal from South Lebanon, and thus initiated the last Intifada, which cost Israel 1,065 lives.... One of the main factors that led to the loss of deterrence was a significant reduction in offensive operations. The IDF, acting on the orders of the political echelon, restrained itself on many occasions for long periods of time, went into a hysteria of installing armor and other means of protection, and has above all become a reactive rather than an offensive force."

III. "Netanyahu Is Stuck With Beilin"

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in popular, pluralist Maariv (September 29): "[During the Intifada], the Left, overwhelmingly, realized that there are two sides to this coin, and that it was impossible to blame only Israel for the turn of events. Slowly but surely, the flow to the center began.... Five years later, once again with summer drawing to a close, once again with a new Jewish year about to begin, the Right is undergoing a similar process. The dream of the greater Land of Israel was dashed long ago, except for on the delusional fringes of that camp.... That is precisely the writing on the wall that Bibi Netanyahu failed to read.... He has continued to use the hackneyed slogans of the previous war. He doesn't realize that the Right is going through the same process of centering that the Left went through.... It is not because he is now perceived as a loser that Binyamin Netanyahu will not be Israel's next prime minister, but because he has remained a leader of the Right, which has since lost most of its troops. Yossi Beilin isn't going to be particularly pleased with the results of the next elections either, because he too has refused to abandon the positions of the old Left, which many of us no longer share."

IV. "The IRA and Us"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (September 29): "The penny should be dropping now. For anyone who is still bewildered by the continuation of Palestinian terrorism, just look at Northern Ireland, where the Irish Republican Army this week decommissioned its weapons.... Two realizations that certainly made that decision inevitable were: 1) that the 'armed resistance' had failed to bring about its desired result, and that further fighting was destined to continue to fail as well; 2) that there was no longer enough money, or enough domestic or international support, for the fighters to continue their bloody battle. All those governments that wish to help bring peace to our region would be wise to absorb these lessons, and apply them immediately.... Unless the condition of complete disarmament is imposed on the Palestinian groups, there is no chance of Israel enjoying the luck of the Irish."

V. "Gaza First"

Attorney Moti Cristal, who was a senior advisor on negotiations affairs to former prime minister Ehud Barak, wrote in Ha'aretz (September 29): "Official Israel has always expressed reservations about international intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.... [But] a stabilizing international intervention means an effective international presence, which is set in motion according to a defined mandate limited in time, and its task is to assist the establishment of the Palestinian security forces, and of the legal system.... [Israel's] second assumption is that Hamas is a terror organization and that there consequently is only one way to eliminate it -- through an all-out war. Hamas has long ceased to be only a terror organization. It is also a political movement, which is economically and principally morally powerful among the Palestinian public.... [Its] political ideology ... has rapidly become more moderate since 9/11.... Unilateral Israeli actions are constructive, in particular given the partner's weakness, but they are limited in their ability to achieve long-term strategic stability."

VI. "Back to the Alon Plan"

Political analyst Daniel Diker, who writes for the conservative periodical Techelet, opined in Maariv (September 29): "[Sharon associates] Tzachi Hanegbi and Eyal Arad are again mentioning the inevitable possibility of a unilateral step. In fact, this is a return to the idea of defensible borders, which

maintains that Israel, as a sovereign state, has the right to hold onto borders that provide its citizens with their minimal security needs; and based on this, that any final status arrangement be based necessarily on annexation, at least partial, of territories, revising the unstable cease-fire lines of 1949 -- lines whose vulnerability invited aggression and perpetuated the conflict. Paradoxically, this doctrine is particularly important in the era of long-range missiles. The additional areas that will be annexed to Israel will enable it to better defend its strategic assets, in deploying army infrastructure and obtaining further depth to defend the home front. This policy has been recognized in international law, in UN Security Council Resolution 242, which recognized Israel's right to 'secure and recognized' borders, and implicitly, that there is a need to revise the 1949 lines. The current president of the United States, George Bush, also officially reinforced the validity of this doctrine in Washington (April 2004) and recently in Texas (April 2005). A month after the Six-Day War Yigal Alon, the foreign minister at the time, drew up an initial concept for sketching defensible borders for Israel, using the territories the IDF seized during the war."

JONES